



MHS COLLECTIONS

## Lumber Camp Cooks Beltrami County



CLARA AND MARTHA

Stene posed for this photo at Bill Landahl's logging camp in Beltrami County in 1917. Logging camps, including their kitchens, had long been men's worlds. The depletion of virgin forests in Minnesota, the westward migration of the big lumber companies, and the outbreak of World War I changed that. By 1917 both trees and men were scarcer in the north woods. While Clara and Martha filled in at Landahl's, their sisters Carrie and Olga worked at another camp nearby.

The cook was a precious employee. Many a camp kept its workers—and

discontent—at bay by providing good and plentiful food. Disgruntled (or hungry) lumberjacks hit the roads in search of improved fare.

Here, Clara and Martha, in short sleeves despite the snow, stand outside the dining hall of rough lumber and poplar supports; the timber cook shack is at the back. Perhaps they've interrupted their work to step outside for a quick snap, except that Clara's serving apron and Martha's cooking coverall show not a spot. Rather than holding spoons or plates—the main tools of their trade—Martha's holding the Gabriel, a horn used to call the workers to meals, and Clara's posed with her fiddle (though she doesn't hold it or the bow with the ease of an accomplished player).

The Stene girls look shockingly

older than their age. Clara at 16 and Martha at 19 couldn't have been much experienced at lumber-camp cooking. Nor did they stay at it for long. By 1920 Martha was married and Clara worked as a family "servant" in Blackduck. By 1930 the Stene girls had vanished from the census records—perhaps all four into marriage.

—ANDREW SCHERER AND  
ANNETTE ATKINS

*History major Andrew Scherer, a 2004 graduate of St. John's University, found this photo when researching his senior thesis that proposes a more complex understanding of Minnesota's lumberjacks. Dr. Atkins, professor of history at St. John's/College of St. Benedict, had the pleasure of supervising his research. She is currently writing a history of Minnesota.*

## Garden Court, Southdale Hennepin County

 MALL SHOPPING, as we know it today, was born in 1956 when Southdale, the first indoor regional shopping center in America, opened in Edina. In time, the term “mall” would be universally used to describe Southdale and other indoor retail centers, but the word was not used in early promotional efforts. Instead, evocative phrases like “European market” and “town square” were employed to lure skeptical shoppers through the front door.

But it was the promise of “eternal spring” that really spoke to Minnesotans. In a state that was rumored to have only 126 good (outdoor) shopping days, and a very long, cold winter, the idea of year-round shopping—without the encumbrance of foul-weather gear—was enticing indeed.

Spring was in permanent residence in the Garden Court, the central three-story atrium that was the epicenter of the Southdale shopping experience. Architect Victor Gruen filled the space with sound, color, scent, texture, light, art, and life. Intended as both a public plaza for people-watching and an oasis of rest for weary

shoppers, the court was studded with islands of colorful, tropical birds and bright, exotic flowers new to most Minnesotans and all the more intriguing because of their very existence in the land of ice and snow.

Southdale was not only a place where “Mrs. Shopper” could spend money in comfort and ease; she could also enjoy original works of art while ascending the escalator. Fanciful sculptural pieces like Harry Bertioia’s *Golden Trees*, a 45-foot-tall abstract composition of shimmering bronze leaves, mesmerized many a flagging consumer and restless child, and today retains a prominent place in the recently expanded mall.

Although the Mall of America can rightfully claim many superlatives in the Minnesota retail record book, there is one feat it will never accomplish. It will never be the place where Minnesotans first learned that shopping could really be fun—and that fun was OK.

—JANE KING HESSION

*Jane King Hession is the co-author of Ralph Rapson: Sixty Years of Modern Design. Her next book, Frank Lloyd Wright in New York: The Plaza Years, 1954–1959, will be published in 2007.*

Sources: Jennifer Komar and Enrique Olivarez, Jr., “A Mall is Born,” *Architecture Minnesota* (Jan./Feb. 1997): 30–31; Southdale Center Press Releases, [www.southdale.com](http://www.southdale.com).





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